

suspicious, and the officers felt themselves surrounded by hostility.

Before the end of the first year, economic difficulties developed. Sugar and meat became scarce. The railroads were deteriorating. The fiscal system, based largely on the monopoly of the sale of vodka, was on the verge of collapse as a result of wartime prohibition. Prices were rising. The workers asked for higher wages, and employers had to meet their demands. The government was aware that things were getting out of control and reluctantly accepted the offer of the Cadets in the Duma to enlist municipal and regional government bodies in an effort to improve medical services in the army, speed up munitions production, distribute and ration scarce foodstuffs, and care for refugees from the occupied western provinces. The Union of the Cities and Townships and War Industry Committees that emerged from this plan helped temporarily, but politically their existence was in itself evidence of the government's failure. Moreover, they were filled with persons of liberal leanings.

A chapter of the Union of the Cities was formed in Irkutsk. One of its first steps was to launch a study of the effect of the war on the local labor market, and I was appointed director of the project.

Waves of refugees from the western provinces were beginning to reach Irkutsk. Most of them came from villages the Cossacks had burned down in compliance with the "scorched earth" policy of Grand Duke Nicholas. A local committee made a survey of the availability of the refugees for local industries. The questionnaire began with the query: "Name of your village? What happened to it?" The answers showed the feelings of the refugees. All that these uprooted and bewildered men and women knew about the war was that they and their families had been loaded into trains and deported while their houses had been burned down and all their property destroyed by order of some general. The High Command could not have invented anything more stupid than the "scorched earth" policy. It left the Germans the fields they needed for the next year's planting and relieved them of the civilian population, which they might have found a liability and a source of trouble. Naturally this policy gave substance to the rumors of treason by the heads of the army and in the Winter Palace.

There were no riots in military barracks, no street demonstrations. All was quiet on the surface, but Russia was approaching a crisis similar to that of 1905 and caused largely by the same factor—a government that commanded no respect of the people and was too weak to wage a war.

But the approaching crisis was deeper than the one twelve years earlier. With a half-insane Emperor who had turned his power over to the false monk whom he and the Empress called "Our Dear